

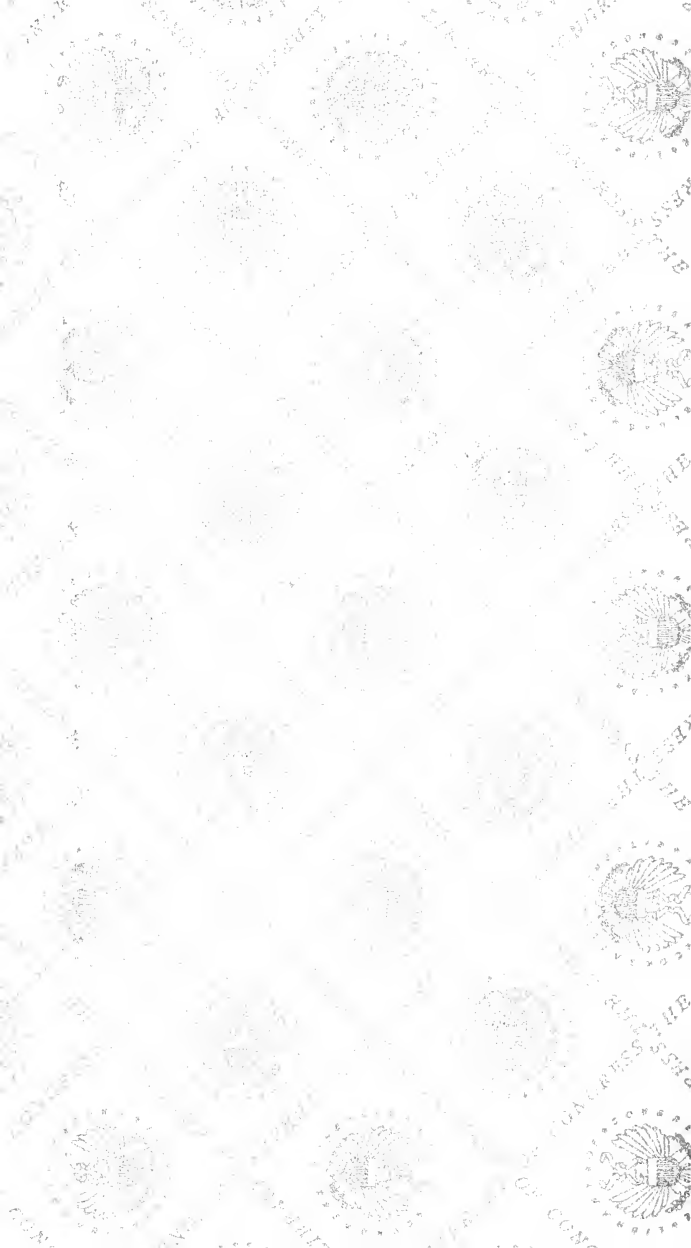
E 286
.C517

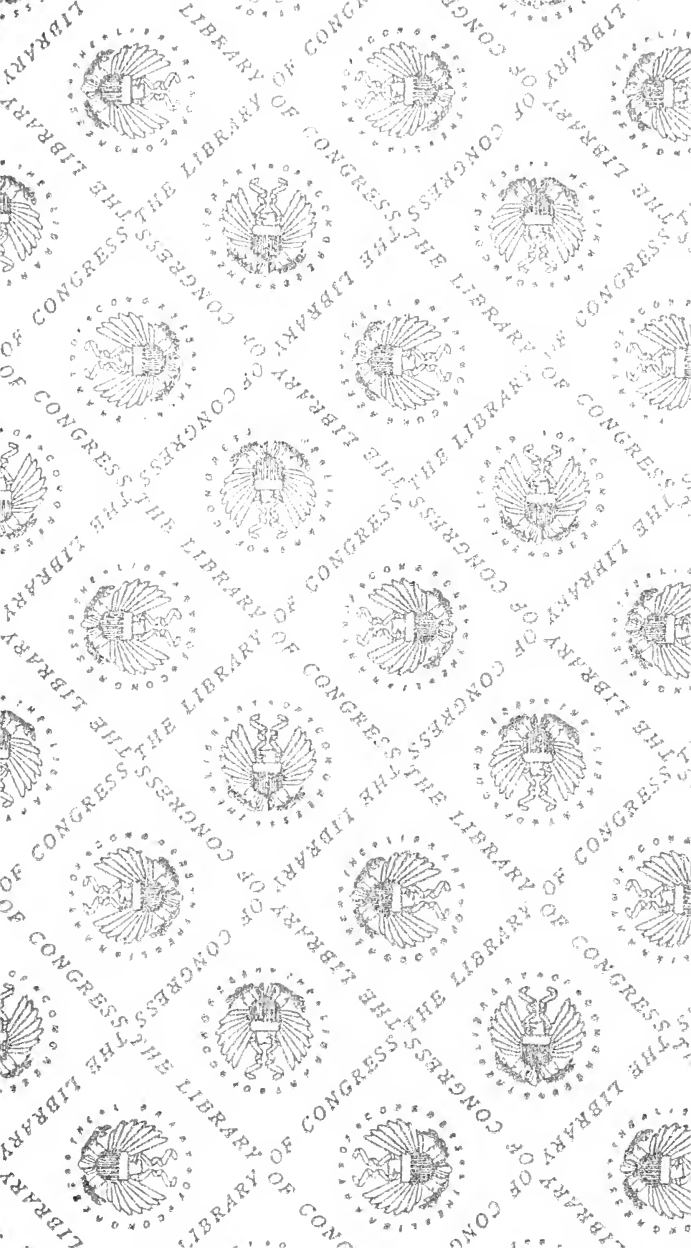
1849

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005727509





ORATION,

DELIVERED ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY,

1849.

AT CHESTER VILLAGE, MASS.

BY ARTHUR McARTHUR, ESQ. OF BOSTON.

SPRINGFIELD:

GEORGE W. WILSON, BOOK, JOB & ORNAMENTAL PRINTER.

1849.

E 286

.C517

1849

4

PREFATORY CORRESPONDENCE.

CHESTER VILLAGE, MASS., JULY 7, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR :

The Oration with which you favored us on the 'Glorious Fourth' entertained all who heard it so deeply, and those who, from their position or other causes, could not have the pleasure of listening to it, feel so disappointed, that our 'Committee of Arrangements' for the late Celebration, request me to beg that you will indulge their desire to possess a copy of it for purposes of publication.

Certain that you will, at your earliest convenience, comply with our earnest wishes, I remain

Yours, very truly and respectfully,

A. C. NELSON.

TO ARTHUR MCARTHUR, ESQ., BOSTON.

REPLY.

BOSTON, JULY 14, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR :

Your polite note of the 7th instant did not reach me till Thursday last, and I now comply with your request therein, to furnish a copy of the address delivered by me on the 'Glorious Fourth' in your village.

In doing so permit me gratefully to acknowledge the kind terms of your note, and to subscribe myself

Very truly yours,

ARTHUR MCARTHUR.

A. C. NELSON, ESQ., CHESTER VILLAGE.

O R A T I O N .

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS :

THE most extraordinary periods recorded in history, are the struggles of the oppressed to be free. The most remarkable examples of virtue, of heroism, and fortitude, have been displayed in defence of human rights. These rights have been contended for against kings, and tyrants, and despot governments, and barbarous institutions ; against learning, and talents, and power ; with the press, with the tongue, with the sword, and on the battle field.

Men have poured out their blood, and laid down their life in defence of human rights. And this warfare between right and wrong, between Despotism and Freedom, has marked almost every age, and been witnessed in almost every country. And yet, previous to the commencement of our own simple, but sublime history, how slow had been the progress of rational liberty ! Notwithstanding the generous exploits of the brave, the bold, and the free ; notwithstanding the sacrifice of blood and treasure which had distinguished every period of the controversy ; history clearly exhibits, that both, nations and individuals, had been

deprived of their most important rights and privileges. The institutions of the past had been partial in their operations, or destructive in their results. In all the recorded history of time, the common and equal Humanity of our race had never been recognized and acted upon as the national idea of a whole people. Indeed, the national ideas of states had been limited and selfish, so as to build up birth and station, and accommodate caste and class. There had been no system embracing humanity, until the Declaration of American Independence — that immortal document, which again, on this return of Freedom's Jubilee, has been read in your presence and hearing, and which we are justly taught to venerate from our first to our latest breath.

It was then, and in that sacred instrument, proclaimed, that all men are created free and equal; that government is instituted for the benefit of the governed, and that it is the right of the people to change both ruler and government, when they become subversive of the public welfare.

The experience and the blessings of seventy-three years have made us familiar with those exalted truths; but when our revolutionary ancestry proclaimed them, the world was bewildered at the sublime spectacle. It was so novel! Nay, it was a romantic thing, to hear a whole nation uttering such great truths! It was then, for the first time, that the common and equal rights of mankind were adopted as the great National Idea of America. It was then, for the first time, that an entire people embraced and acted upon those great principles of justice and equity, which, running hori-

zontally through the concerns of morals and politics, swerve neither to the right nor to the left, to answer the selfish interests of the few, or to trample on the sacred rights of the many ; but which, with the most gratifying processes, raise up the oppressed and down-trodden, and bring down to a universal platform, those who, for selfish purposes, had been elevated above a rational standard of humanity. Such was the grand philosophy, and the lofty design of our fathers ; to the success of which, appealing to the God of nations for the rectitude of their motives, they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Noble and illustrious men ! Your great names, and your great deeds, shall be venerated by all the generations who shall dwell upon the broad and beautiful continent, to which you gave freedom and independence !

The principles to which I have just adverted, were not however to be vindicated alone by the pen and the tongue. Their progress had been slow ; they had made their way in the world only through the lapse of interminable centuries ; and even in the days of our Revolution, they had to be vindicated by trials of fire, through years of war, covered with smoke, and drenched in blood. The colonists were however reluctant to resort to this direful alternative. Again and again did they recite their catalogue of grievances in petition and memorial. Peaceful remonstrance at length became exhausted, and the result proves that they were as terrible in arms as they had previously been humble in supplication. The arm which they had so long lifted in unheeded appeal, was now raised with all the energy

and wielded with all the force which could nerve it in a generous cause. But it is not my design to enter upon the details of the Revolutionary struggle, nor to enlarge upon the heroic valor which has shed upon it an imperishable lustre. It proceeded ; battle followed battle, diversified with victory and disaster ; year succeeded year in the arduous contest, alternated by the swelling aspirations of hope, and the gloomy forebodings of fear. Its blood-stained records were, however, at the end of seven years, completed, and the battle of Yorktown was the last field of sacrifice, and the crowning glory of military achievement. Americans had now redeemed the pledges which they had uttered to Great Britain and to the world, in their declaration of political independence.

Let us pause for a moment to contemplate one of the grandest spectacles of that great drama. The war was closed. The country was exhausted ; without means, without revenue, overwhelmed with debt, and assailed on every hand by the clamors of the public creditor. Such was the condition of Government. There stood the heroic army, who had endured the sufferings and fought the battles of the war. How should they be paid ? Large arrears were due to both officers and men ; and the question comes up, how shall these be discharged ? Many of them had risked their all, and generously devoted their fortunes to the struggle ; and a great portion of them have nothing to depend upon for the subsistence of their families, but their lawful and hard-earned claims upon the country. They ask and demand their pay ; but Congress, without the means, are unable to comply. And now, when delay

has filled the soldiers' mind with discontent, and exasperated the temper, an incendiary appeal is made to the army, and circulated through their ranks, exhorting them never to part with their arms, or separate from their companions, until they have extorted that by force from the fears of the Government, which its perverted sense of justice has so long refused. We have seen the Roman armies trample upon the liberties of which they were the sworn conservators ; we have seen Cromwell and his soldiers enter the British Parliament, and expelling the representatives of the people, convert the free Commonwealth of England into a despotism, and its Protector into a usurper. In more modern days, we have ourselves, many of us, seen the soldiers of Napoleon erect the colossal power of their imperial captain on the ruins of a republic. What then shall be the conduct of the American army ? Do they threaten, by such brute force, to compel remuneration for their toils, or to take possession of authority, and keep down the nation by force of arms ? They have won battles ; they have conquered armies ; and subdued the national enemy. They still wear those weapons — the companions of their glory — and while they have the power in their own hands, shall they not help themselves to that which had been delayed so long ? The temptations of self-interest, and the dazzling enchantments of ambition allure to such courses ; but in vain. The army does nothing to compromise their illustrious character. Having been faithful to the country, they will now signally show that they will be true to their own honor. Those arms, the elements of their power, are yielded to that country they have so long defended. They

address the parting word to each other, and retiring to their distant homes, dissipate forever that power which sprung from their union. And in this, their last great act, they add to history one of the most remarkable examples of virtue and patriotism — an army victorious over their enemies, victorious over themselves. Let the surpassing narrative flow onward, in unfading memory ; and whenever, in all coming time, military ambition would fain trample upon popular liberty, may this example be effectually invoked for guidance and protection !

When the Independence of America was acknowledged by the general consent of mankind, and when peace had terminated the terrible conflict of arms, Humanity had achieved one of her most brilliant victories. Those years of strife, among the obscure and almost powerless colonies, were not for themselves alone, but for all time, and for the whole family of man. They gave an impulse to human hopes, and opened for them a boundless career in the progress of our race. And was it not strange indeed, that those stripling communities, who dwelt in the small towns and hamlets of the New World, and who were scattered through the forests, and lived in the huts and log-houses of the wilderness, should be among the first to teach the able statesmen and the imperial governments of the civilized world, the importance of those political rights, and the sacredness of those political truths which are the dearest heritage of man ? The influence of their example, together with the principles which they upheld, even down to the present moment, continue to quicken thought into activity, and as the march of Time moves

onward from that era, the shouts of popular progress which they mingled with the clanking of their armor, is now heard revived from the watch-towers of Freedom, pealing over the fallen thrones of Europe. The people of the old World, after the lapse of three-quarters of a century, are sending back their answer to the Declaration of American Independence. God grant that that answer sound in the haughty ear of despotism the knell of its usurpation !

The struggle which ended with the American Revolution, was a struggle for Liberty. The remarkable race of men who had been the actors in its awful realities, regarded liberty as the greatest earthly blessing of a nation. They estimated the privileges and institutions of Freedom, as constituting the true grandeur of a community. Experience, however, that unerring criterion by which every system must either fall or stand, teaches us, that opinion and principle are the springs of authority and government in a State of enlightened freedom. The institutions peculiar to a free state, depending as they do upon moral ideas, are slow in their progress. It may not be unprofitable to pause for a moment upon a striking illustration. Take, for example, a subject living under an absolute government. He is taken care of by his rulers, but after such a manner as to leave him nothing worth the caring for. They give him his religious and political faith ; they select his pursuits and occupations. His mind is not permitted to expand by free enquiry, and his voice is never raised in the noble accents of free speech. It would be easy to predict what would be the current of such a being's life. Reduced to the condition of a vegetable, with the chief de-

lights of existence unenjoyed, his life, like a dull, sluggish, smooth stream, flows ever onward, amidst a waste and a solitude, without a ripple, to the great ocean of eternity. The advance from such a state to one of rational and enlightened freedom, must necessarily be gradual. Regard, on the other hand, the citizen of a free government, and mark the contrast. He takes care of himself, and is able to do it. He not only selects his religious and political faith, but he changes them at pleasure, according to his interests or convictions. His pursuits are various; and from the humblest to the most exalted, from the most private to the most public, from the obscurest to those who are surrounded by the most dazzling influences of social or political position, he may freely pass, according to his abilities and desires. His interests are various, and for them he contends with his fellow citizens. Thus exercising all his faculties, the whole man is developed, and, living in the constant enjoyment of his natural rights, his soul is expanded and enlarged to a rational size, by the duties and dignity of his position. His voice is heard unfettered and potent, wherever he chooses to raise it. The practical cause of this difference between the citizen of a free government and the subject of an absolute one, is this: that the former is controlled by a moral force system of government, and the latter, by a physical force system. Now these two, the moral and physical force systems, pervade and act upon the moral and political world, in precisely the same manner that attraction and repulsion act upon and pervade the physical world. The physical force system, like attraction, is constantly contracting, condensing, and diminishing men's souls into pig-

mies, and making them crawl into mouse holes. The moral force system, like repulsion, is forever expanding, enlarging, and dilating the soul into new fields of usefulness, and a conscious apprehension of its own importance and prerogatives. Now, the interval between these two positions is immense ; and so gradual has been the passage from the one to the other, that it has taken about six thousand years to accomplish it. The improved institutions of rational liberty grow into development, by the aid of past experience, and the examples of preceding time. Indeed, they can never be established fully, until invoked by superior valor and intelligence ; and they can only be preserved by patriotism and public virtue. Macintosh has therefore truly said, that '*political institutions grow, they are not made.*' There is profound philosophy in the remark. It is the true secret of the origin of our political institutions ; for they have grown ; they have been growing since the planting of the colonies. It is a great mistake to suppose that our political institutions had date and beginning with the Revolution. That event only marked a period in their progress, and the glorious era of their independence. The seeds from which they sprung had, long before that time, been planted in the back woods of Virginia, the Carolinas, and good old Massachusetts. They date from the arrival of the Mayflower, and the landing of the pilgrims in the snow-clad wilderness, on the flinty rocks of Plymouth. If, in the old world, the rights of conscience were subverted, the persecuted fled to the new one, bringing with them emancipation and free thought. If political collision occurred between the old governments, and the friends of human improvement,

the latter escaped to swell the new settlements of America. The first colonies were planted by those who, fleeing from bigotry, persecution, and the restraints of arbitrary power, came hither to find new homes, to erect the hearth and the altar in a free land, and, should need demand, to water with their blood the sacred tree of liberty. These influences, in their gradual action, built up free institutions, which, in their natural growth, deeply imbued the mind of the people with the principles of rational freedom. It would not however be fair to deny, that perhaps the greatest portion of the early settlers did not entertain that enlarged sense of civil liberty, which comprehends religious freedom. By their acts they appeared to repudiate a liberal toleration of theological doctrines and opinions. There were those among them, however, who had adopted the glorious maxims of toleration. The early annals of the colonies are replete with the struggles between these two. And the friends of freedom, in religious as well as civil polity, proved themselves, in these controversies, among the ablest advocates that ever upheld the grand doctrines of religious freedom. Civil liberty and religious despotism cannot subsist together. The one is right, the other is wrong. You can no more reconcile right and wrong than you can harmonize fire and water. Wrong must perish in the unequal contest. It perished in this conflict, and right surviving has continued to bless us, by making us all perfectly free and perfectly equal.

As a general thing, however, the regulations and prosperity of the colonies were founded in freedom. This was the natural growth of their age and circumstances. Fortunately divided by the tempest and the

ocean from the piercing eye and the rude inspection of tyranny, the process of growth went onward, until it could not be stopped. Liberal ideas of government became firmly fixed on the virgin soil. Almost a century before the Revolution, Massachusetts had acquired her charter of liberties, including popular representation in the General Court; the right of the people to choose their own Governors; the trial by jury; habeas corpus; together with no small degree of freedom of speech, and shortly afterwards, of the press. The spirit of freedom and independence was also nourished into strength and maturity on the plantations of Virginia. Nor was New York long behind her two sisters. Her legislative power resided in a Governor and General Assembly, chosen by the people. Every freeman voted for representatives, without restraint; trial by jury of twelve men; no tax to be assessed on any pretence whatever, but by the consent of the Assembly; no quartering soldiers on the inhabitants; no martial law; and no person professing faith in God, to be questioned for any difference of opinion — such were the liberties claimed by the people of that colony, which has since marched by giant strides to the acknowledged title of the Empire State.

In Pennsylvania, the General Assembly was chosen by the ballot box, every man being capable to vote or be elected; Justices chosen by the people; Judges appointed by the Assembly; every man to be free from oppression and slavery, and no man to be imprisoned for debt. Rhode Island and Connecticut presented the strange spectacle of pure and absolute Democracies, under the shadows of Royal Charters.

I make these selections from among many evidences of a similar character, in order to show that, at the close of the seventeenth century, and shortly afterwards, the work of reform had commenced. The noblest ideas of human progress were kindling the mind with the generous impulses of freedom; and the foundations of those institutions were begun, which are now the boast of the Republic, and the best heritage of her children.

Institutions grow, they are not made. It was in vain that the kings of England attempted to check this growth. It was in vain that the second James revoked the charters of some of the colonies, and sent forth his hireling satraps, to make laws, to levy taxes, and to sequester the liberties of the people. It was in vain that subsequent monarchs and parliaments sent forth royal Governors, covered all over with gems and scarlet, accompanied by armed men, to make the colonies subject to the crown, and submissive to the purposes of English administration. Like Saturn of old, the mother country undertook to devour her children, but they, by the combined intelligence and importance of the people, outgrew and over-mastered her. It was in vain that England undertook to make institutions for her obstinate provinces. John Locke, one of the greatest of English philosophers, drafted a constitution for the colony of North Carolina. It instituted castes and classes, with a titled nobility, Landgraves, Palatinates, Caciques and what not! It was so complete and beautiful a theory, that he thought all his other writings would sink into insignificance, and this alone would carry his name in unfading memory to all future ages.

But alas for the dreams of the philosopher ! the people of North Carolina paid no attention to Locke's Constitution. He might as well have undertaken to establish it in a community of foxes and racoons and wild cats. Democracy was the natural growth of America, and the people continued to hold their public meetings in a simple, democratic way, settling their affairs on the principles of equity and justice. Institutions could not be made for them, they were growing. It was not a titled nobility that was wanted ; it was deliverance from bondage and oppression ; it was freedom of mind, of opinion, and universal equality. The historian remarks, in relation to this Constitution, that so little was it connected with the vital interests of the state, that history with difficulty preserves it from oblivion.

But I have said that England could not make institutions for her American colonies. With pain and melancholy, let me for a moment retract the assertion, and point out at least one exception. She did succeed in making one institution, and one which still subsists, in all its 'gigantic character of crime ;' and it is owing to this that we have, on this, the national Sabbath of our freedom, to mourn the existence of one-sixth of our population in a state of helpless bondage. Our declaration of human rights, with its self-evident truths, was practically inefficient to enfranchise the enslaved negro, so firmly fixed had become his hapless lot, under the policy of the mother country.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century, England, under the protection of her own laws, sent forth her slave-ships, to steal Africans, and bring them to 'supply the Plantations.' This work of rapine and crime was

called a Trade. The horrid work of selling negroes was called Commerce. The coast of Africa, wherever the wretched captives were received by the slaver, was denominated a Market; and the Jurists of England, with a prodigality of legal wickedness, converted 'negroes into merchandize.' The vocabulary in which Av-
arice enumerates her treasures, was extended to human beings, that they might the more easily be degraded to the level of beasts and things. A monopoly in this horrid traffic, was granted for some time to the famous South Sea and African Companies; and finally, to stimulate the trade to the greatest activity of promiscuous plunder, the monopolies were revoked, and all Englishmen were invited to enter freely upon the barbarous and inhuman competition. The Governors sent out by the English monarchs to rule the colonies, had their instructions to encourage the slave-merchant, and to promote the infernal traffic in men. Every restriction upon the increasing importations of these children of misfortune, was removed. The people were not allowed to check the evil, although they contemplated its rapid increase with fear and abhorrence.

The whole power and tendency of English legislation for nearly a century, protected and fostered the growth of colonial slavery; and for nearly all that time, the abstract question of right was not even propounded by her statesmen and successive administrations. The colonies opposing the African slave-trade, multiplied laws, with the design of restricting its importations of misery and affliction. But England was to be moved from her inexorable purpose neither by entreaty, nor colonial legislation. The days of her

self-sacrificing virtue were not then anticipated. The demands of her commerce and manufactures were paramount in importance, and dictated her laws. The proceeds of the slave-trade gratified the passion of her merchants for wealth, and the introduction of the colored man into her colonies, enlarged the market for the sale of the fabrics of her manufacturers. She succeeded in her perfidious design, and slavery became an American institution. The final consequences of this monstrous wrong are yet in the unknown mysteries of the future. Let us trust, that although we might justly reckon upon severe judgments, yet that Heaven will so order the removal of the evil, as to preserve the Union of this happy country, and the stability of this glorious government.

In other respects, England could not suppress the growing liberties of the colonies ; nor could she supersede them by aristocratic forms of government ; and it only required a certain degree of British tyranny and taxation, to rouse the people to declare that they should henceforth be an independent nation of freemen. That Declaration, in the fulness of time, went forth, and the world entered upon a new epoch.

I have thus traced the true origin of our political institutions ; and I have done so purposely, for if we understand their origin, we shall more fully appreciate their value, and devise the means of their preservation. As they were reared in tribulations, and sufferings, and sacrifices ; as they were moistened with the tears, and cemented with the blood of a martyred ancestry ; so they must be maintained by vigilance and public virtue. It were vain for us to put an idolatrous trust in them,

as if, by some magic power, they would be preserved from corruption, even without our aid. As we find that they were the offspring of public and private intelligence among the people, we may rest assured that the same noble bulwark is their only sure protection. Now it is the glory of Massachusetts, and it is a glory which she is proud to share with many of her sister States, that she has adopted and extended this means of preserving freedom. She recognizes and discharges the sacred duty of educating her children. With a parental arm, the Commonwealth plants the Common School, and sustains it with munificent endowments.

There is nothing more gratifying, in the infancy of the American colonies, than the pious zeal which the early forefathers displayed in furnishing the means of education. They came in successive multitudes from the shores of Europe. They came, for the most part, voluntary exiles, not poor, and abandoned, and ignorant; for among them were the wealthy, the well-born, ripe scholars, and philosophers, bringing with them, to the unreclaimed wilderness, all the intellectual influences peculiar to the highest advances of refinement and learning. They came here entertaining the grandest designs of human progress. Yearning for a better condition of things, for a purer state of society, and for freer forms of government, they crossed the dismal ocean. As the best means of carrying out these exalted hopes and aspirations, it was their earliest care to promote learning. The importance of teaching knowledge, they regarded as exceedingly precious both to religion and liberty, as well as to all the other high objects which sustained them in their new homes.

The church and the school-house grew up together ; nor was it long before the classic shades of the college presented their invitations to those who would spend their time in the studies of philosophy, learning, and Religion. And thus was education woven into the texture of our political existence ; and thus did it become one of the great national ideas of America.

The progress of liberal ideas, and the advance of humanity to the high destinies designed for it by the Creator, are vitally connected with the education of the people. We are nearly unanimous on the point that the people should be educated ; and the citizens of this state have responded to this sentiment, in a manner worthy of their high descent ; for year after year they voluntarily consent to tax themselves by the million, for the support of the school-house and the educator. The God of Heaven, in his universal beneficence, has endowed each human being with a portion of his own celestial genius. This sacred fire has been given us to preserve us from error and ignorance, and to enlighten us in regard to our duties and interests. It is only by cultivating it, that we can keep alive its serene flame. If neglected, it expires in the black darkness of ignorance, leaving us a prey to all the destructive miseries of life. Knowledge purchased at any price, is the cheapest and surest defence of a nation. All history is full of the terrible lessons taught by ignorance. It is the prolific source of most of those evils from which spring the prejudices and superstitions of the mind, which bind it in a bondage more degrading than that of the chain or the lash. From it proceeds the want of human industry, and the indolence which ruins both

individuals and nations. To illustrate this, take one or two examples, selected from a superabundance of the same kind. There is a desert plain in Italy, seventy miles wide, and two hundred and thirty miles long. It is called the Campagna Di Roma. Throughout its extent, a tree is seldom visible. It is destitute of towns or villages, with only here and there a rude hut, the solitary habitation of the wandering herdsmen; half-wild cattle pasture upon its noxious solitudes; and their keepers usually fall a prey to its pestilential vapors and malignant fevers. Its few wretched inhabitants, during the summer months, fill the hospitals of Rome, or take refuge in the adjacent neighborhoods. It is a desert waste, given up to pestilence, disease, and death. Over the face of this fearful desolation, are the scattered fragments of ruined towers, and temples, and circuses, and monuments, and aqueducts, overgrown by rank weeds and plants. And yet, this dreary waste, in the days of the ancient Romans, was celebrated as the loveliest spot, the very garden of Italy. The fertility of its soil, the beauty of its climate, and the abundance and richness of its natural productions, were favorite themes with the Latin poets and historians. Let me quote. A writer, speaking of it says: 'In the times of the ancient Romans, this dreary solitude exhibited a smiling picture of abundance and fertility. Corn-fields, groves, villas, monuments, alternated with each other, and according to the accounts of Strabo, Varro, and Pliny, the air was remarkably healthy.' It was in one of the cities of the Campagna, that the veteran soldiers of Hannibal were rendered effeminate by the surfeit of luxuriant abundance.

Look on this picture, and then look on that — the ancient and modern — and tell me what has produced such terrible changes. Alas, such are among the results of human ignorance! The ruins of the common school are not to be found beside the scattered fragments of the temples and the monuments of ancient Rome. The masses of her people, without the improving aid of knowledge, regardless of their own welfare, ignorant of the means of promoting it, fell a prey to self-indulgence, indolence, and the sure curses of idleness. The waters in the beautiful lakes of this smiling garden, became stagnant from the want of human industry. The evil was permitted to increase. The desert superseded the cultivated field, and pestilence impregnated the balmy atmosphere with death. Such, O Ignorance! are the fearful retributions which flow from thy dark and capacious womb, in the turbid currents of misery!

The Hesperides were, in ancient times, called Gardens. They abounded with fruit of the most delicious description. They were filled with groves; their fragrance perfumed the air; and their orchards bloomed with ceaseless luxuriance. The fabled Juno, according to classical mythology, here procured the golden apples which she gave to Jupiter in commemoration of their nuptials. And yet the modern inhabitants of this favored spot, according to a recent writer, ‘seldom taste bread, but are obliged to rake with their iron hooks for a precarious meal, beneath the chestnut tree and the oak.’ The cold blasts of barbarous ignorance have howled through the groves and the fruit trees, and blighted the unsheltered exuberance of the earth.

Even in countries pretended to be highly civilized, we shall find a large portion of mankind held, by a want of knowledge, to modes of living which we might expect to find only among rude and barbarous ages. In some parts in the heart of Europe, the farmer smokes his bacon and hams in the same room occupied by himself and his family ; and thus they all get smoked together ! In other places, the same roof covers both the family and the cattle ; the ox drags his burden with his horns, and the horse draws the plough with his tail. The Spanish peasant, although by a little intelligent labor he might gather abundant harvests, stubbornly adheres to his loathsome garlic and rancid oil. The Russian serf, with blind submission to the barbarous usages of his fathers, despising both manure and plough, continues to turn the exhausted bosom of his mother earth with a harrow. Oh, how accursed is that country whose soil is cultivated, or rather abused, by an ignorant and degraded husbandry ! Americans have been accused of speaking of their institutions in too boastful a spirit ; but when we speak of our common school system, we may well challenge the admiration of mankind. We cannot indulge an undue excess of enthusiasm for so sacred an object as informing the mind of a whole people. In an especial manner, let the farmers of America prove that they are the best friends of the Republic, by being the efficient benefactors of this great work. Without disparaging the claims of the other classes of our society, it must be decided that Agriculture is the great Art of America, and that the cultivators of the soil are the true conservators of all our interests. Let them be free, happy, intelligent and

prosperous, and the whole land, through every nerve and fibre, vibrates to the genial influence. Standing, therefore, as he does, the acknowledged peer, the highest and proudest member of the community, let him bear in mind that he occupies this position only because the wonders of science have been used to cultivate his mind, as well as his fields; and that it is this which invests his occupation with the dignity of independence. Let Education close her seminaries; let the Instructor cease his ministrations at the Altar of Knowledge; and the farmer would not only be the first, but the greatest sufferer, not only in his physical and civil, but also in his moral condition. Without a general system of education, there would be no security for the social elevation of the husbandman. He would soon dwindle into insignificance, and losing every incentive to exertion, let him read his sure doom in the examples, both from ancient and modern times, which I have cited. Sloth, indolence, and misguided effort, would reduce him to oppression, want, and helpless dependence; and ranking with his fall, would be the ruin of the Republic, and the degradation of the people. Did I not say well, that education was the cheapest defence of a community? Look at the enormous and lavish expenses bestowed on the national defences of the United States; her navies, her armies, her fortifications; her dock-yards, her arsenals, and military stores. How vast and exuberant the expenditure for these, her war establishments! But these can only prevent the hostile foot of an enemy from pressing the American soil, with an enemy's purpose. But there is a foe that cannot be repelled by the armaments of war. Subtle, insidious,

it is the thief which breaks through the bleeding wounds in the bosom of humanity, and robs her of the electric spark of mental illumination.

Come forth, Calculation, with thy pen, and I will show thee, that Knowledge gives a generous return for all that may be expended in her purchase. She will return a hundred fold, nay a thousand and ten thousand fold, so that those who have experienced her blessings will be the most liberal in the gifts which they pour upon her altars. Richer is she than the glittering treasures of California, without a dangerous ocean to cross, and a still more dangerous shape of society to encounter. As generous is she as the sun, which licks up the latent moistures of the earth, to pour them in the descending shower which

‘Fertilizes the dusty plain.’

A large and respectable portion of our fellow-citizens have recently adopted as their maxim, the idea of Free Soil. This is a noble idea. It is worthy of the age. It is worthy of all the ages. Let me, with all deference, inculcate one which transcends it. It is that of Free Education. This latter will not only make Free Soil, but Free Men. It profits a man not so much to tread upon free soil, if his own mind, enchained by ignorance, cannot appreciate the inestimable blessing. So it profits a man not so much to be created free and equal, if, after his birth, he loses his equality, and it is never again galvanized into life and action. Let his mind become enlightened, and he cannot become enslaved. An enlightened people cannot be subdued. They will always triumph over the mercenary hosts of their enemies.

Nations have usually been distinguished for some great leading idea. Thus the national idea of Egypt was that of a gloomy, antique grandeur, as exemplified in her huge piles and pyramids. That of Greece was glory—glory in arts, arms, and literature. That of Rome was universal conquest by physical force. And so it has been with the great examplers of modern times. The national idea of Germany, like that of Egypt, has been, until recently, a gloomy, antique grandeur. That of France, like Greece, has been glory in arts, arms, and philosophy. While Great Britain emulates the example of Rome—conquest and subjugation by the strong arm, and the bloody sabre.

Let America beam forth from her national idea the serene light of the age, Free Education—let her record it in the topmost line of her national scroll—let her recreate it in her statute books—let it shine in her capitol, her towns and villages, throughout the interminable extent of her vast territories—let her Eagle substitute it for the thunder-bolt in his talons, as he soars to the regions of the sun;—and then may we rely upon the sure confidence, that American freedom and institutions will continue to improve and bless mankind, through all the circling periods of an earthly immortality !







